

GREAT WORDS ABOUT SALVATION

SIN Ephesians 2:1-7

The person who is aware of events around him knows that something is wrong with the world in which he lives. In fact, deep down he knows that the world is in a mess. He may rationalize that things are going to get better and fantasize about a Utopia on earth, but deep down he knows the world is in trouble. All but a few dreamers would agree upon the fact of world calamity, but as to why the world is in such a state and how to cure it is where men disagree.

When all the arguments are finally sifted through, there remain just two basic premises as to why the world is in a mess. It is either because of bad environment or bad people. The vast majority of humans will not believe that it is bad people because of their own human pride, so they dogmatically assert that it is bad environment. They blame man's wicked deeds on poverty, government, big business, bad upbringing, or whatever. They find every excuse under the sun to put the blame on anything but man himself. This person is often called a humanist. The humanist believes in individual and social improvement by ethical culture, moral enlightenment and socialization. However, the Bible says the real problem is that man has a nature that is basically evil; man is sinful and man creates an environment that is sinful. The conflict between theism and humanism, naturalism and supernaturalism revolves around the basic nature of man. How a person views history, psychology, sociology, law, politics and economics is directly related to an understanding of the basic nature of man. If a man is basically good, his problem is one of ignorance and he needs more education and culture. But if he is basically corrupt, he needs more than information; he needs a new nature.

How we view the nature of man is most acute in the field of religion. If man is basically good, he does not need a Saviour from sin and hell, but he does need a better life with intellectual and moral training. If, however, man is depraved, then he needs a Saviour to redeem him and give him a new nature. Not until men see they are sinners will they ever cry out for a Saviour. To give up the sinfulness of man is to give up salvation and Biblical Christianity!

Only when we have a sickness accurately diagnosed by a doctor will we be willing to take the prescribed medicine, so only when a person sees he is a sinner will he flee to Christ for salvation.

The definition, cause and effect of sin is whatever God declares it to be in the Holy Word. As Christians, we are bound to the inspired scripture; therefore, to the law and the testimony!

DEFINITION OF SIN or WHAT IS SIN?

In the world of philosophy and religious liberalism (there is no real difference), many definitions of sin have been set forth. Leibnitz said sin was basically deprivation. Spinoza said sin was an illusion. Schleiermacher believed sin to be a lack of God-consciousness. Ritschel thought sin was only ignorance. Others have stated that sin was the evolution of the lower nature over the higher nature, but what says the scripture?

The Bible uses three basic words to describe sin. Sin which means "to miss the mark." Iniquity which means "to pervert" or "to make crooked." Trespass or transgress which means "rebellion."

According to the scriptures all men are guilty of personal sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin is said to be lawlessness for it is the breaking of God's holy law. "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 Jn. 3:4). Have you ever stolen? Have you ever lied? Have you ever desired something that was not yours? Have you always honored your parents? Have you ever committed adultery? If so, you are a transgressor

of God's law and you stand before God a guilty sinner. Sin is also rebellion against the authority of God. "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight. . ." (Psa. 51:4). Sin may also be a failure to do the good which man knows he should do but does not do it. "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Sin, therefore, is a failure to reach God's holy standard by going astray and a failure to do what is right in a moral sense. Sin is a voluntary rebellion against God, so that man is not only a sinner but is a guilty sinner. "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God (guilty before God)" (Rom. 3:19).

UNIVERSALITY OF SIN or HOW WIDESPREAD IS SIN?

The Bible from cover to cover declares the wickedness of men. The O.T. gives a picture of man as he really is and not what we would like him to be. "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). ". . . for there is no man who does not sin" (I Kgs. 8:46). "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" (Eccl. 7:20). ". . . the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives" (Eccl. 9:3). "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isa. 64:6). "The heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick. . ." (Jer. 17:9). The Lord Jesus Christ declared that men were sinful. "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mk. 7:21-23). The Apostles echoed the same by pronouncing human nature corrupt. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I Jn. 1:8). "As it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one'" (Rom. 3:10-12).

At this point you may still deny the universality of sin because you do not believe the literalness of the Bible. Let me, therefore, appeal to your common sense. This reasoning may seem to be an oversimplification but my point is that sin is all about us and we must deal with it accordingly.

We never have to teach a baby to do evil but we must instruct him to do good. A baby is naturally inclined towards evil, not right.

Why do we put locks on doors and windows if men are not sinful?

Why do we pass laws unless it is to protect society from the evils of men?

Why do we have a police force to maintain law and order if men are basically good?

History is filled with the wicked deeds of men. History is mostly one nation conquering another nation. It might interest you to know that in the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war.

If you pick up your newspaper or watch the news on T.V., 75% of the news is dealing with man's rebellion to God's order - murder, rape, sex, drunkenness, drugs, rioting and you name it. If men are basically good, why do these things go on? You say bad environment makes men do these things. Yet, sin is running rampant in the middle and upper middle classes and the wealthy often are the most guilty. Arnold Toynbee said, "Of 21 notable civilizations, 19 perished, not from conquests from outside, but from decay from within." Just recently in America, we have had in the highest office

in our land men guilty of deceit, cover-up and intrigue. Even now we hear of nude women who were in the halls of the White House. Sexual looseness is everywhere in our society and this may well destroy our nation. Dr. J. D. Unwin, historian at Cambridge University, concludes: "Any human society is free to choose either to display great energy, or to enjoy sexual freedom: The evidence is that they cannot do both for more than one generation."

THE CAUSE OF SIN or WHERE DID SIN BEGIN?

The Fall: In Genesis chapter three, we have recorded for us the sin of Adam and Eve, who were our first human parents. Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden and given one prohibition. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said, "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

Adam and Eve had a free will under the sovereignty of God, for while God did not force Adam and Eve to sin, it did not take Him by surprise or happen outside of His control. Adam and Eve had no sin nature as men have today, so they were free not to sin. Though they could be tempted, they could not be compelled or impelled to sin. Adam and Eve chose as a deliberate act of the will to sin; this was a free act. After they had sinned, they immediately became conscious of their guilt and hid themselves from God. The results of their sin were immediate. They were separated from God and aware of guilt. A curse was pronounced on them and their posterity which involved spiritual and physical death, condemnation and separation and the dreadful spread of evil. Adam and Eve acquired a sin nature that affected every area of their personality -- will, mind and emotion. The Fall would have devastating effects upon all the descendants of Adam and Eve. Paul Little in the book Know What You Believe said,

As a result of the Fall, the image of God in man was badly marred in both its moral and its natural dimensions. Man lost his original inclinations toward God and became a perverted creature, inclined away from his Creator. His personality was sadly marred. His intellect became bound, his emotions corrupted, and his will enslaved. He lost his true manhood.

Original Sin: Original sin is a Biblical explanation of why all men are sinners. Perhaps "original sin" is a misleading term and it may be better to call it "inborn depravity." The essence of original sin is that man's universal sin is traced back to the fall of Adam and Eve.

The Bible states that the sin of Adam was imputed or given directly to every member of the human race. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death to all men, because all sinned--" (Rom. 5: 12). Because of imputed sin, all men die physically and spiritually. "For in Adam all die. . ." (I Cor. 15:22). Paul Little again comments,

Adam represented us just as, when our government declares war, it represents, affects, and involves us. As a result of Adam's sin, all who are in Adam die. This includes each of us. We tend to think that things might have turned out differently if we had been in Adam's place. But each of us, by doing as Adam did, has ratified the decision our first parents made to rebel and disobey God. Who would claim he had never sinned? And so we are justly condemned today not only for Adam's sin, but for our own sin.

The Bible also teaches that the corrupt evil nature of man (the sin nature) is passed from Adam to every member of the human race. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psa. 51:5). "And were by nature children of wrath. ." (Eph. 2:3).

The guilt, penalty and condemnation of Adam came upon all men by imputation and by nature, for all men have sinned in Adam. This includes children as well as adults.

This may seem unfair to the human mind but this is what the Word of God declares. Augustine said that the so-called innocence of children was more a weakness of limb than purity of heart.

C.E.M. Joad was the professor of Philosophy and Psychology at the University of London for many years. He was a Rationalist and adopted Shaw's Life Force as a working creed. Later in his life he wrote:

My Life Force creed was. . . a little inadequate on the moral side. Sin and evil I dismissed as the incidental accompaniments of man's imperfect development. Then came the war and the existence of evil made its impact as a positive and obtrusive fact. All my life it had been staring me in the face, now it hit me in the face. For what, after all, is human history but a story of battles, sieges, massacres, murders, tortures, persecution and arson - a record, as Gibbon points out, of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind? And this long roll of greivous events has been inscribed by deep seated elements in human nature of which it is the outcome - by the pride, self-interest, envy, ambition and cruelty of successive generations of human beings. The war opened my eyes to the impossibility of writing off what I had better call man's 'sinfulness' as a mere by-product of circumstance. The evil in man was due, I had been taught, either to economic circumstance (because people were poor, their habits were squalid, their tastes undeveloped, their passions untamed), or to psychological circumstances. For were not psychoanalysts telling me that all the regressive, aggressive, or inhibited tendencies of human nature were due to unfortunate psychological environment of one's early childhood? The implications are obvious; remove the circumstances, entrust children to psychoanalyzed nurses and teachers, and virtue would reign. I have come flatly to disbelieve all this. I see now that evil is endemic in man and that the Christian doctrine of original sin expresses a deep and essential insight into human nature. Reject it and you fall victim, as so many of us whose minds have developed in an atmosphere of left-wing politics and rationalist philosophy have fallen victim, to shallow optimism in regard to human nature, which causes you to think that the millennium is just around the corner, waiting to be introduced by a society of adequately psychoanalyzed, prosperous Communists.

THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF MEN BECAUSE OF SIN or WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF SIN?

Natural Man Is Corrupted in Nature: Every aspect of man is tainted and corrupted by sin. His intellect is corrupted. ". . . being darkened in their understanding" (Eph. 5:18). His conscience is perverted. ". . . but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). His heart is deceitful. "The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick" (Jer. 17:9). His flesh and spirit are filthy. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. . ." (II Cor. 7:1) and his will is corrupt. "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

Natural Man Is in Bondage to Sin: The unsaved man is a slave to sin and lives for sin and self. "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin'" (Jn. 8:34).

Natural Man Is Alienated from God: Sin alienated and estranged natural men from fellowship with the holy, sovereign God. "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hid His face from you, so that He does not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

Natural Man Is Spiritually Lost: According to the Bible, man is in a helpless and hopeless spiritual condition because of sin. He is spiritually dead. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). He is unable to understand

spiritual things. "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him . . ." (I Cor. 2:14). He is blinded spiritually by Satan. ". . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving . . ." (II Cor. 4:4). He is unable to please God. "For the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7,8) and he is not seeking God. "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who seeks after God" (Rom. 3:10-12).

The Bible gives us many descriptions about the unconverted man and it is not a very pretty picture. The unsaved man is said to be dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), abominable (Job. 15:16), corrupt (Psa. 53:1), filthy (Psa. 14:3), lost (Lk. 19:1), miserable (Rev. 3:17), blind (Isa. 53:2), naked (Rev. 3:17), ungodly (Rom. 5:6), full of evil (Eccl. 9:3), mad (Eccl. 9:3), deceitful (Jer. 17:9), enemies (Rom. 5:10), hopeless (Eph. 2:12), children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), aliens (Eph. 2:12,13), deaf (Psa. 58:4,5), without excuse (Rom. 1:20), laden with iniquity (Isa. 1:4) and guilty (Rom. 5:19).

One elderly matron, after having original sin explained to her, exclaimed loudly, "Well, if all of us really are as bad off as all that, then God help us!" And that is just the point. God must help us if we are to be saved, receive a new nature and progressively conquer the old nature. God must intervene sovereignly to bring a man or a woman into a right relationship to Christ. Sinful man does not want to come to God because in his natural state he cannot come to God. However, God is able to do the impossible; God is able to work a miracle! God is able to intervene and bring the new birth to the unconverted! "But God" is our great hope, for He is able to give man a new nature in Christ.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1-7).

Charles Hadden Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher of 150 years ago, so ably described his own spiritual condition before conversion and how God moved to save him. He said,

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the streets, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought, if God had left me alone, and had not touched me by His grace, what a great sinner I should have been! I should have run to the utmost of sin, dived into the very depths of evil, nor should I have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me. I feel that I should have been a very king of sinners, if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of Divine Grace. If I am not at this moment without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me, and that will was that I should be with Him where He is, and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit. Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God; of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun; but the sun enlightened

me. I did not commence my spiritual life, -- no, I rather kicked and struggled against the things of the Spirit; when he drew me, for a time I did not run after Him; there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me, -- warnings were cast to the wind, -- thunders were despised; and as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, "He only is my salvation." It was He who turned my heart, and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed say with Dodrige and Toplady, --

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow;"

(A Defense of Calvinism).

Sin Theologically Expressed: In theological language, men have termed all this teaching about sin in the words total depravity. Man is totally or completely sinful and every area of his being is corrupted by sin. He is perverse and sinful from the top of his head to the soles of his feet.

Total depravity does not mean that all men express outwardly their depravity equally, nor does it mean that the unconverted man cannot do good things, nor does it imply that there is no innate knowledge of God or no conscience, nor does it mean that every unregenerate man will indulge in every form of sin. A philosopher, de Maistre said, "I do not know what the heart of a rascal may be; I know what is in the heart of an honest man; it is horrible!"

Total depravity does mean that all men have a bent towards evil and unconverted men can do nothing pertaining to salvation; they can do no spiritual good and that they have no natural ability to respond towards God.

CONCLUSION

The basic problem of man is not ignorance, not finitude, not environment, not glands and not emotions, but sin. Man must understand that his being is at enmity against God and he is not subject to the One, true and living God. Man must see his sinfulness and cry out "against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." When a man sees his sinfulness, he will begin to look earnestly for a Saviour.

Our problem of sin is an abomination, not accident; blindness, not blunder; disease, not defect; choice, not chance; enmity, not ignorance; madness, not mistake; wilfulness, not weakness. Our problem is sin which manifests itself in a selfish life that chooses to operate independent of God. Our naturally proud hearts and wills can only be bent toward God by God.

My friend, do you see that sin is your great enemy? You wilfully break God's moral laws because of sin and sin will cause God to cast you into hell. Sin is destructive; it kills. God will kill that which kills by eternal punishment. Do you, my friend, see your plight? Has sin deceived you into thinking that your spiritual condition is not so serious? Martin Luther said, "So great is the corruption and blindness of human nature that it does not see nor sense the greatness of sin." Do not be deceived, for except God saves you, you shall perish in your sins.

You need God to sovereignly intervene in your life! You need God to shed His grace and mercy on you and bring you the new birth. You need a new heart and a new mind and a new will so that you can know God, love God and obey God. In short, you need to be saved! How can you be saved? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him."